

Today's News - Tuesday, September 16, 2014

- Russell x 2 re: "obdurate" architecture and "willful buildings that demand heroic efforts to preserve" + celebrity architecture vs. "architecture as a social and environment-enhancing art. The two need not be mutually exclusive."
- Saitta debates starchitecture through a Denver lens, where "starchitects have both enhanced and eroded the quality of our built environment" (so have "locatects"): "Is there a sweet spot where architectural boldness and innovation meet sensitivity to local context, history, and culture?"
- Hume, meanwhile, hails Maki and Correa's Aga Khan Museum and Ismaili Centre: "a needed dose of civic ambition" on an otherwise "forlorn site" in Toronto: "the arrival of something that aspires to permanence, let alone excellence, feels provocative" - it "doesn't confront so much as it quietly raises the stakes. And all this without resorting to preciousness."
- Adler on building communities with a soul: "Charming neighborhoods are not magic. We just need to recognize that features like character are actually up to us" - using smart public policy.
- Kimmelman is "intrigued" by three young architects' "9 x 18" plan "because it's about more than apartment buildings plopped onto vacant land. The plan is rough, but a start."
- A Hong Kong developer wants to convert four luxury projects into 4,000 tiny apartments: "Other players may follow the shift in strategy" if the developer wins approval.
- Lamster laments a "dog-chasing-its-tail phenomenon" in Dallas, which is spending millions to develop an urban playground while "moving forward with a plan to drive a massive highway through that space, cutting the city off from the very amenity it is building."
- Moore minces no words about what he thinks of plans for London's Garden Bridge: it "perpetuates the idea that you can plan a city by headlines, stunts and novelties, a culture of I'm-a-celebrity-build-me-some-infrastructure, rather than addressing what it really needs."
- Green parses the four "inventive" design proposals for D.C.'s 11th Street Bridge Park to be built on the foundation of an old freeway spanning the Anacostia River (hopefully to include cleaning up a rather stinky part of the river).
- Voters approve funding to develop 14 new parks in Seattle that "won't dramatically alter the physical landscape of the city," but will make the city that much more livable.
- A former Australian prime minister bemoans Sydney being fed "junk" apartments: "he stressed the importance of preserving and enhancing open spaces, and avoiding cement-heavy, Alcatraz-like 'archi-parks' designed by 'ponytail-wearing architects'" (we hear mullets are making a come-back, too).
- In the U.K., MPs to try their hand at urban design in a "move to help them understand built environment better."
- A new Moscow-based webzine shows "an ugly side of Russia" that "transforms" the grim and mundane "into a raw but compelling diary of youth made by the generation born at the turn of 1990s" (amazing images).
- On brighter notes: a tasting of "how wineries evolved from chateau-only to high design" (a toast to all!).
- One we couldn't resist: Bjarke illustrates his architectural philosophy on a big (what else) piece of paper "highlighting his inspiration for what he calls 'promiscuous hybrids.'"
- Eyefuls of the winners of the inaugural City of Vancouver Urban Design Awards.
- Call for entries: James Marston Fitch Mid-Career Fellowship and Samuel H. Kress Mid-Career Fellowship Grants + 32nd Annual IALD International Lighting Design Awards.

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Obdurate by Design: The difficult cause of willful buildings that demand heroic efforts to preserve: Which buildings of extraordinary idiosyncrasy can be saved? The answers to some hard questions suggest what's possible - and offer guidance to those designing adventurous buildings today. By James S. Russell -- Tod Williams Billie Tsien; Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Paul Rudolph; Kallmann & McKinnell; John Johansen; John Silber; Frank Furness; Edward Durell Stone; Bertrand Goldberg - Architectural Record

When Esthetic Elites Inflict Strange Architecture: ...today's rejection of celebrity architecture in favor of architecture as a social and environment-enhancing art. The two need not be mutually exclusive. That they are reflects a much larger social dysfunction, not an esthetic dispute...Thankfully, when dullness threatens to overwhelm us, bold, willful, difficult, and gutsy architects will step in - if we let them. By James S. Russell -- Robert Venturi; Denise Scott Brown/Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates (VSBA); Steven Izenour; Paul Rudolph; Charles Jencks; Frank Lloyd Wright [images]- JamesSRussell.net

Debating Starchitecture: A Mile High View: Is there a sweet spot where architectural boldness and innovation meet sensitivity to local context, history, and culture? Denver is a great place for evaluating...contemporary urbanism, including starchitecture's value for a city and its people...should prompt us to think about how buildings can be designed to produce a variety of meanings, and maintain the capacity to be "read" differently by citizens, across time and changing circumstances. By Dean Saitta -- Witold Rybczynski; James S. Russell; Gio Ponti; Philip Johnson; Michael Graves; Daniel Libeskind; David Adjaye; Santiago Calatrava; Curtis Fentress - PLANetizen

Aga Khan Museum [and Ismaili Centre] a needed dose of civic ambition for Toronto: Not only did the Ismailis construct their monuments in a forlorn site...they hired two of the finest architects in the world...Not only did they see the possibility of beauty where no one here had noticed, they put their money — \$300 million and a priceless collection — where their mouth is...the arrival of something that aspires to permanence, let alone excellence, feels provocative...doesn't confront so much as it quietly raises the stakes...And all this without resorting to preciousness. By Christopher Hume -- Fumihiko Maki; Charles Correa [video]- Toronto Star

How to give a community a soul: Charming neighborhoods are not magic. They can be developed with smart public policy...We just need to recognize that features like character are not immutable. They are actually up to us. By Ben Adler-Grist Magazine

Trading Parking Lots for Affordable Housing: "9 x 18" Plan Ties Development Rules to Public Benefits: It is the size of a typical parking space. That lowly slice of asphalt has prompted three young architects...to come up with what could be an innovative way to ease the housing crisis...I'm intrigued by their proposal...because it's about more than apartment buildings plopped onto vacant land...trades asphalt for housing and amenities...The plan is rough, but a start. By Michael Kimmelman - Institute for Public Architecture; Miriam Peterson/Nathan Rich/Peterson Rich Office; Sagi Golan [images]- New York Times

Sun Hung Kai Properties at forefront of push for tiny Hong Kong homes: Other players may follow the shift in strategy if the developer wins nod to convert four luxury projects in New Territories into 4,000 tiny homes...wants to reduce unit sizes from the original 2,000 sq. ft. each to small flats, including studio units as small as 200 sq. ft....- South China Morning Post

Welcome to Dallas: Paradox City: The conflicting opinions on downtown parking lots and garages - too many vs. not enough - is indicative of the dog-chasing-its-tail phenomenon that drives our decisions about highways...At the same time that the city is spending millions to develop the space between the levees into an urban playground, it is moving forward with a plan to drive a massive highway through that space, cutting the city off from the very amenity it is building. By Mark Lamster-Dallas Morning News

London's Garden bridge: barking up the wrong tree? ...at £175m, is the floating forest a benefit for Londoners – or Boris Johnson's vanity project? ...does [it] need so much designer-y gesticulation? ...it could learn something from the High Line...the more I contemplate this project the less sense it makes...perpetuates the idea that you can plan a city by

headlines, stunts and novelties, a culture of I'm-a-celebrity-build-me-some-infrastructure, rather than addressing what it really needs. By Rowan Moore -- Thomas Heatherwick/Heatherwick Studios; Arup; Dan Pearson- Observer (UK)

Inventive New Designs for D.C.'s 11th Street Bridge Park: Expected to cost upwards of \$40 million...will run 900 feet over the foundation of an old freeway spanning the Anacostia River... By Jared Green -- Balmori Associates/Cooper, Robertson & Partners; OLIN/OMA; Stoss Landscape Urbanism/Höweler + Yoon Architecture; Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT)/NEXT Architects/Magnusson Klemencic Associates [images, links]- The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

Seattle gets ready to develop 14 new parks: The city now has the money to transform lots into 12 small parks, plus two additional parcels where the city has purchases pending, thanks to voter approval...- Seattle Times

Former PM Paul Keating says Sydney is fed "junk" apartments; fears for city's open spaces: ...while systems in place lack imagination, he stressed the importance of preserving and enhancing open spaces, and avoiding cement-heavy, Alcatraz-like "archi-parks" designed by "ponytail-wearing architects." - Architecture & Design (Australia)

MPs to try hand at urban design: Move is to help them understand built environment better...Urban rooms, where the public can discuss the built environment, are now set to be established in half a dozen towns and cities.- BD/Building Design (UK)

Russia Without Us: the zine rediscovering the spirit of a lost generation: There is an ugly side to Russia: grey high-rises and littered courtyards, suburban trains and desolate small towns, graffiti-covered stairwells and small kitchens. Moscow-based online zine transforms this grim mundanity into a raw but compelling diary of youth made by the generation born at the turn of 1990s. [slide show]- The Calvert Journal (UK)

How Wineries Evolved from Chateau-Only to High Design: ...until very recently, the architecture of wineries has been purely functional. -- Laurence Ferar and Associates; Herzog & de Meuron; Alvaro Siza; Frank Gehry; Santiago Calatrava; JS2; WRK [images]- Curbed

Lego, dreams and virtual worlds: why new buildings needn't be so boring: Bjarke Ingels has released a video detailing his architectural philosophy and his ideal world where architecture transforms surreal dreams into reality...highlighting his inspiration for his self-proclaimed style of architecture – what he calls 'promiscuous hybrids'. -- Bjarke Ingels Group/BIG [video]- Architecture & Design (Australia)

The first-ever City of Vancouver Urban Design Awards recognize and celebrate great architecture and urban design. -- Measured Architecture; Lang Wilson Practice in Architecture Culture; Henriquez Partners/Durante Kreuk; Acton Ostry Architects; Franci Architecture; Gair Williamson Architects; Shape Architecture; Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architects [images]- City of Vancouver (Canada)

Call for entries: James Marston Fitch Mid-Career Fellowship and Samuel H. Kress Mid-Career Fellowship Grants (research grants of \$15,000 each); open to U.S. citizens or residents; deadline: October 15- James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation

Call for entries: 32nd Annual IALD International Lighting Design Awards; earlybird registration deadline (save money!): October 24 (submissions due November 7)- International Association of Lighting Designers (IALD)

"House in Motion": Danish artist Jes Fomsgaard has worked with architectural motives - inspired by the principles of modern city planning...Architect Anders Abrahamsen has been exploring the field between art and architecture in both theory and praxis for years...a first time collaboration between the two; at the Danish Architecture Center, Copenhagen [images]

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